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WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

5 1. A printing system for printing an image based upon
6 input image data; said system comprising:
7 a printer manufactured by a printer company and
8 having a native resolution;
9 a raster image processor manufactured and programmed
10 by one or more processor companies, different from the
11 printer company; said processor processing such image data
12 and transmitting processed image data to the printer;
13 a two-bit data pipeline carrying such in-process data
14 through at least part of the processor; and
15 a drop table for converting such data from the pipe-
16 line to the native resolution of the printer, said table
17 being established by said one or more processor companies
18 different from the printer company, and having an output
19 dot-per-pixel structure that differs from data structure
20 within the pipeline.

1 2. The system of claim 1, wherein:
2 the table is configured by instructions held or gen-
3 erated in the raster image processor.

1 3. The system of claim 2, wherein:
2 the table resides within the printer.

1 4. The system of claim 1, further comprising:
2 in the processor, precooked printmask information and
3 procedures; and
4 in the printer, popup printmask information and
5 procedures for refining precooked mask information from
6 the processor.

1 5. The system of claim 4, wherein the precooked and
2 popup printmask information and procedures:
3 comprise nozzle-out error hiding; and
4 have a format that expressly defines which pass
5 prints each pixel, as distinguished from provision of a
6 discrete binary mask for each pass.

1 6. The system of claim 1, wherein:
2 the table output dot-per-pixel structure is mapped to
3 the data structure within the pipeline substantially thus:

	<u>in pipeline</u>	<u>dots/pixel out</u>
5		
6	0 0	0
7	0 1	1
8	1 0	1
9	1 1	1.

1 7. The system of claim 1, wherein:

2 the table output dot-per-pixel structure is mapped to
3 the data structure within the pipeline substantially thus:

4
5 in pipeline dots/pixel out
6 0 0 0
7 0 1 1
8 1 0 1
9 1 1 2.

1 8. The system of claim 1, wherein:

2 the table output dot-per-pixel structure is mapped to
3 the data structure within the pipeline substantially thus:

4
5 in pipeline dots/pixel out
6 0 0 0
7 0 1 1
8 1 0 2
9 1 1 4.

1 9. The system of claim 1, wherein:

2 the table output dot-per-pixel structure is mapped to
3 the data structure within the pipeline substantially thus:

4
5 in pipeline dots/pixel out
6 0 0 0
7 0 1 1
8 1 0 3
9 1 1 8.

1 10. The system of claim 1, wherein:
 2 the table output dot-per-pixel structure is mapped to
 3 the data structure within the pipeline substantially thus:

	<u>in pipeline</u>	<u>dots/pixel out</u>
6	0 0	0
7	0 1	2
8	1 0	5
9	1 1	12.

1 11. The system of claim 1, further comprising:
 2 a computer for receiving or generating such image
 3 data, and transmitting such data to the processor.

1 12. The system of claim 10, wherein:
 2 the computer is also for preprocessing such received
 3 or generated image data, preparatory to transmitting to
 4 the processor.

1 13. The system of claim 10, particularly for use with a
 2 color image; and further comprising:
 3 a monitor, associated with the computer, for viewing
 4 the image; and wherein:
 5 the processor further comprises at least part of a
 6 stage for reconciling colors viewed at the monitor with
 7 colors to be printed at the printer.

1 14. The system of claim 10, particularly for use with a
2 color image; and further comprising:
3 a monitor, associated with the computer, for viewing
4 the image; and wherein:
5 the computer comprises at least part of a stage for
6 reconciling colors viewed at the monitor with colors to be
7 printed at the printer.

1 15. A method of providing a system for printing an image
2 based on data using a printer that is manufactured by a
3 printer company and has a native resolution; said method
4 comprising the steps of:
5 manufacture and programming, by one or more companies
6 different from the printer company, of a raster image
7 processor for processing such data and transmitting such
8 processed data to the printer;
9 provision, by said one or more companies different
10 from the printer company, of a portion of a two-bit data
11 pipeline carrying such in-process data through at least a
12 part of the processor; and
13 establishment, by said one or more companies dif-
14 ferent from the printer company, of a drop table for
15 converting such data from the pipeline to said native
16 resolution, said table having an output dot-per-pixel
17 structure that differs from data structure within the
18 pipeline.

1 16. The method of claim 15, further comprising:
2 manufacture, by the printer company, of the printer.

1 17. The method of claim 15, further comprising:
2 interconnection of the processor and printer by an
3 end-user independent of said companies.

1 18. The method of claim 17, further comprising:
2 provision of a computer for preprocessing the data
3 and furnishing the preprocessed data to the processor; and
4 interconnection of the computer and processor by the
5 independent end-user.

1 19. A method of providing a system for printing an image
2 based on data using a raster image processor manufactured
3 and programmed by one or more processor companies, said
4 processor having a portion of a two-bit data pipeline car-
5 rying such data through at least part of the processor,
6 and said processor further generating or holding instruc-
7 tions for configuring a printer drop table; said method
8 comprising the steps of:
9 manufacture and programming, by a printer company
10 different from the processor company, of a printer for
11 receiving such image data from the processor; said printer
12 having a native resolution; and
13 establishment, by said printer company, of a drop
14 table within the printer for converting such data from the
15 pipeline to said native resolution, said table having an
16 output dot-per-pixel structure that differs from data
17 structure within the pipeline, and said table being con-
18 figured by said instructions.

1 20. The method of claim 19, further comprising:
2 manufacture and programming, by said one or more
3 processor companies, of the processor.

1 21. The method of claim 20, further comprising:
2 interconnection of the processor and printer by an
3 end-user independent of said companies.

1 22. The method of claim 20, further comprising:
2 provision of a computer for preprocessing the data
3 and furnishing the preprocessed data to the processor; and
4 interconnection of the computer and processor by the
5 independent end-user.

1 23. The method of claim 17, further comprising:
2 provision of a computer for preprocessing the data
3 and furnishing the preprocessed data to the processor; and
4 interconnection of the computer and processor by the
5 independent end-user.

1 24. A printer for printing an image, based on input image
2 data;
3 said printer comprising:
4 a plural-bit data pipeline capable of processing such
5 data at more than one bit per pixel; and
6 an interface for accepting an externally defined drop
7 table for converting plural-bit data from the end of the
8 pipeline to a specific number of dots per pixel, prepara-
9 tory to printing;
10 wherein the number of dots per pixel defined by the
11 table may be substantially any integral value.

1 25. The printer of claim 24, wherein:
2 the interface also accepts, in addition to the table,
3 plural-bit image data from the end of the pipeline and a
4 specification of a printmode defining how such data should
5 be printed; and
6 wherein the number of dots per pixel defined by the
7 table may be substantially any integral value less than or
8 equal to a number of passes defined by the printmode.